



Third Sunday in Advent

11 December 2016

Sentence

Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who are of a fearful heart, "Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God."
Isaiah 35.3-4

Collect

God of the burning sand and thirsty ground:
you called John into the wilderness
to announce a new creation far from palaces of royal power;
make us ready for your intensity,
the judgment that opens our senses
to the poverty of our world and calls to life what lingers in death;
through Jesus Christ, the one who is to come. **Amen.**

A reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah

This is a song of renewal when all creation will reveal God's glory and the helpless, returning exiles (taken captive to Babylon after the destruction of Jerusalem in 587BC) will receive new courage and hope. They will journey to Zion (Jerusalem) on a safe and readily traversed highway prepared for them by God.

The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad,
the desert shall rejoice and blossom;
like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly,
and rejoice with joy and singing.
The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it,
the majesty of Carmel and Sharon.

They shall see the glory of the LORD,
the majesty of our God.
Strengthen the weak hands,
and make firm the feeble knees.
Say to those who are of a fearful heart,
'Be strong, do not fear!
Here is your God.
He will come with vengeance,
with terrible recompense.
He will come and save you.'
Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,
and the ears of the deaf unstopped;
then the lame shall leap like a deer,
and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy.
For waters shall break forth in the wilderness,
and streams in the desert;
the burning sand shall become a pool,
and the thirsty ground springs of water;
the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp,
the grass shall become reeds and rushes.
A highway shall be there,
and it shall be called the Holy Way;
the unclean shall not travel on it,
but it shall be for God's people;
no traveller, not even fools, shall go astray.
No lion shall be there,
nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it;
they shall not be found there,
but the redeemed shall walk there.
And the ransomed of the LORD shall return,
and come to Zion with singing;
everlasting joy shall be upon their heads;
they shall obtain joy and gladness,
and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Isaiah 35.1-10

Reader Hear the word of the Lord
ALL **Thanks be to God**

Psalm: Song of Mary at 8am APBA page 31

Best known to Anglicans as the Magnificat from the first line of the Latin translation 'My soul magnifies the Lord', Mary sings this song (in Luke's gospel) when she visits her elderly cousin Elizabeth, pregnant with John the Baptist. Her words evoke the ancient promise of God to bring about a just world, a promise that will be kept in her child, Jesus.

A reading from the letter of James

James urges believers to be as patient as a farmer who must wait upon the coming rains for the harvest. Just as the farmer cannot control the rain, so we cannot know when the Lord Jesus will come nor how. We must be alert and watching the horizon of our world and our lives to welcome God's coming in whatever way that occurs.

Be patient, therefore, beloved, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious crop from the earth, being patient with it until it receives the early and the late rains. You also must be patient. Strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near. Beloved, do not grumble against one another, so that you may not be judged. See, the Judge is standing at the doors! As an example of suffering and patience, beloved, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.

James 5.7-10

Reader May your word live in us
ALL and bear much fruit to your glory.

Gospel Acclamation

Praise and honour to you Lord Jesus Christ

See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, he will
prepare your way before you.

ALL Praise and honour to you Lord Jesus Christ

Reader The Lord be with you

ALL And also with you

Reader A reading from the holy gospel according to St Matthew

ALL Glory to you Lord Jesus Christ.

In Matthew's narrative, the report of John's imprisonment reaches Jesus immediately after his time of temptation in the wilderness and is the catalyst for Jesus' ministry (see 4.12-17). Later when John's disciples ask, 'Are you the One?' Jesus points to the evidence and leaves them to decide for themselves.

When John heard in prison what the Messiah was doing, he sent word by his disciples and said to him, 'Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?' Jesus answered them, 'Go and tell John what you hear and see: The blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them. And blessed is anyone who takes no offence at me.'

As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John: 'What did you go out into the wilderness to look at? A reed shaken by the wind? What then did you go out to see? Someone dressed in soft robes? Look, those who wear soft robes are in royal palaces. What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written, "See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you."

Truly I tell you, among those born of women no one has arisen greater than John the Baptist; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

Matthew 11.2-11

Reader For the Gospel of the Lord
ALL **Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ**

Bible Readings next week

Advent 4

Isaiah 7.10-16 Psalm 80.1-7, 17-19 Romans 1.1-7 Matthew 1.18-25

Prayer for the Week. Almighty God, you have made us and all things to serve you: come quickly to save us, so that wars and violence shall end and your children may live in peace, honouring one another with justice and love; through Jesus Christ, your Son our Lord, who lives with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,

one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

Pray for the Faithful Departed

We remember before God: Harriet Hood, Janette Mary Ray, Colin Prain, Cecil Macnaughtan, John Lindley Daish, George Matthews, Colin Harris *whose anniversaries occur this week.*

Commemoration of the week. December 13 Lucy, virgin and martyr (d. c.304). Martyred for her faith in the Roman persecutions under the Emperor Diocletian. St Lucy's Day is celebrated in Sweden with special biscuits and young girls wearing wreaths of candles on their heads.

December 14 John of the Cross (1542-1591). A Carmelite friar and one of the greatest poets and mystics that Spain has produced. He showed that by a life of faith and love of God, one can move towards deeper union with God. His mystical writings have been enormously influential.

